

REMARKS

INTRODUCTION:

In accordance with the foregoing, claims 1, 3, 4, 13-18, 20-22, 29-31, and 34-48 have been cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer, claims 2, 5, 19, 23, 25, 27, 32, and 33 have been amended, and claim 49 has been added. No new matter is being presented, and approval and entry are respectfully requested.

Claims 2, 5-12, 19, 23-28, 32, 33, and 49 are pending and under consideration.

Additionally, Applicants have not yet received acknowledgement that the Examiner has considered the documents submitted with the Information Disclosure Statement filed April 4, 2001, and respectfully request such acknowledgement.

ALLOWABLE SUBJECT MATTER:

In the Office Action, at page 3, item 3, the Examiner indicated that claims 2, 5-12, 14, 16, 17, 19, 21, 23-28, 32, 33, and 35-39 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. Applicants respectfully submit that claims 2, 5, 19, 23, 25, 27, 32, and 33 have been rewritten in independent form, and that claims 2, 5-12, 19, 23-28, 32, 33 are now allowable.

Claims 14, 16, 17, 21, and 35-39 have been cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer.

REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. §102:

In the Office Action, at page 2, item 2, the Examiner rejected claims 1, 3, 4, 13, 15, 18, 20, 22, 29-31, 34, and 40-48 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by Patsiokas (U. S. Patent No. 6,493,546). The reasons for the rejection are set forth in the Office Action and therefore not repeated. Applicants traverse this rejection and respectfully request reconsideration.

Claims 1, 3, 4, 13-18, 20-22, 29-31, and 34-48 have been cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer.

NEW CLAIM:

Applicant respectfully submits that for at least similar reasons as the Examiner's stated allowability of claim 16 if rewritten in independent form, new claim 49 patentably distinguishes over the cited art and should be allowable.

CONCLUSION:

In accordance with the foregoing, Applicants respectfully submit that all outstanding objections and rejections have been overcome and/or rendered moot, and further, that all pending claims patentably distinguish over the cited art. Thus, there being no further outstanding objections or rejections, the application is submitted as being in condition for allowance, which action is earnestly solicited.

If the Examiner has any remaining issues to be addressed, it is believed that prosecution can be expedited by the Examiner contacting the undersigned attorney for a telephone interview to discuss resolution of such issues.

If there are any underpayments or overpayments of fees associated with the filing of this Amendment, please charge and/or credit the same to our Deposit Account No. 19-3935.

Respectfully submitted,

STAAS & HALSEY LLP

Date March 14, 2005

By: Michael A. Bush
Michael A. Bush
Registration No. 48,893

1201 New York Avenue, NW, Suite 700
Washington, D.C. 20005
Telephone: (202) 434-1500
Facsimile: (202) 434-1501